

EXHIBIT 4

System criticized by family

Slain officer's mom, widow talk to senators

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Lori Hawkins (left), widow of slain Irving officer Aubrey Hawkins, listens as her mother-in-law speaks to the Senate Criminal Justice Committee. Jayne Hawkins called for a citizens oversight committee in the aftermath of the escape of seven convicts.

"Walk in my shoes for one minute ... feel the pain and anger that I feel. ... Now is the time for change."

— Lori Hawkins, widow of slain Irving police officer

The six surviving escapees are accused of capital murder in the death of Ms. Hawkins' son outside an Oshman's Super Sports USA store on Dec. 24. The seventh committed suicide last month before he could be recaptured.

Ms. Hawkins, who has blamed the criminal justice system for her son's death, specifically asked that the citizens oversight committee include Charles Terrell, former chairman of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice, former governor Ann Richards and Mary Helen Salazar of the League of United Latin American Citizens.

"My son lost his life to defend justice," Ms. Hawkins said. "Please help me make something good come out of this tragedy."

Lawmakers said they, too, are frustrated by the apparent system breakdown that led to the tragedy.

"We are not the enemy," said Sen. Kenneth Armbrister, D-Victoria, the committee chairman. "Some of the things you have to say are not based on accurate information."

The officer's widow broke down in tears during her testimony. "I keep trying to make sense of all this," she said, her voice cracking. "I live alone now. ... I live with his clothes in the closet, his car in the garage and his toothbrush still in the same place he left it."

"This is what is left in my life now," Mrs. Hawkins said, adding that her husband would have celebrated his 30th birthday Feb. 23. "Walk in my shoes for one minute ... feel the pain and anger that I feel. ... Now is the time for change."

Complaints from the Hawkins family ranged from the amount of money the agency contributed toward the reward for information leading to the recapture of the escapees, to what they referred to as "an attitude" by lawmakers.

The slain officer's mother, who had met privately with several legislators earlier in the day, criticized acting Lt. Gov. Bill Ratliff for being "defensive" and "very disinterested."

At the committee hearing, Sen. John Whitmire, D-Houston, took issue with those statements.

AUSTIN — During strained and sometimes contentious testimony Wednesday, the mother of slain Irving police Officer Aubrey Hawkins called for an independent investigation, an oversight committee and the wholesale firing of top prison officials within the Texas criminal justice system.

"We have to watch. We have to care. We must make sure those we have trusted to do the job are doing their job," Jayne Hawkins said during a three-hour presentation before the Senate Criminal Justice Committee. "We must hold accountable those who cannot live up to the TDCJ [Texas Department of Criminal Justice] mission statement."

Accompanied by her daughter-in-law, Lori Hawkins, and three individuals affiliated with the prison system — a retired captain, a demoted director of training and a former inmate — Ms. Hawkins voiced concerns that varied from inadequate rehabilitation efforts to corruption within prison walls.

She and the others also spoke of complacency among prison guards, lack of training and poor pay.

Committee members disputed some of the observations and at times defended a system that has been widely criticized since the escape of seven inmates from the Connally Unit in Kennedy on Dec. 13.

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"You can have a significant role, but you cannot come up and berate," Mr. Whitmire told Ms. Hawkins. "We're all in this together."

Mr. Whitmire also defended criminal justice executive director Wayne Scott, whom he called "professional" and "honest."

"I really don't think it's fair to place the blame ... at the door of the TDCJ," Mr. Whitmire said. "It's easy for us to criticize. I think it's totally unfair to try to make him a villain."

Ms. Hawkins also recommended changes in the department's inmate classification system, which determines work assignments and areas of access for inmates within the prison walls.

A review of the classification system, which has been in place since 1984, is under way. The review is scheduled for release next month and recommendations will take several weeks to implement.

"What resonated today was things that we've been saying all along," said Mr. Scott, who sat through the testimony. "This is a public policy matter. I'm going to work with whatever decision the committee makes."

In the end, all lawmakers could commit to was a good-faith effort.

"We'll give you our best answers to issues that you raised," said Sen. Royce West, D-Dallas. "Your testimony has not fallen on deaf ears."